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CHARGE,

delivered at the Ordination

of the Reverend

Mr. JOHN STURCH, jun.

at NEWPORT,

in the Isle of WIGHT,

21. June 1753.

By WILLIAM FOOT.

Published at the Request of the Hearers.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. Noon, at the *White Hart*, in
Cheapside, near the *Poultry*; and J. WARD, in
Cornhill, 1753.

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of the Regiment

JOHN A. B. R. C. T. J.

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WILLIAM FOOT

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CHARGE, &c.

AS you have now, my brother, publicly devoted yourself to serve God, in the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ; I am to address myself unto you in relation to the Office you have undertaken. In doing which, I would put you in remembrance of such things, as, I am persuaded, you will think of great use and necessity in the course of your ministry.

My thoughts on this matter shall be comprized under these two heads.

I. The *nature* of the work you have undertaken.

II. The cultivation of such a *spirit* and *behaviour*, as will be needful, to fulfil your ministry with comfort and honour to yourself, and usefulness to the people committed to your care.

I. You will give me leave to put you in remembrance of a few things concerning the *nature* of your work.

You have dedicated yourself to serve God in

the gospel of Christ, and to promote the salvation of the souls of men, by preaching the doctrines and administering the ordinances, which Christ hath established. From whence it is obvious to remark,

1. That your work is of great moment and importance. For you are employed in business of a like nature, you are engaged in the same design, for which the Son of God came down into our world; that is, to rescue men from the bondage of iniquity, and to purify unto him a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

The direct business of your function is to accomplish the same end, which God himself has principally in view, in the dispensations of his providence and grace; that is, to lay a foundation for the everlasting happiness of mankind, by fixing in them the principles, and bringing them to the love and practice, of piety and virtue.

The importance of employments is, in reason, measured by the good ends and valuable purposes to which they serve. Is the Physician's employ judged of great consequence, whose province is to alleviate and cure men's bodily disorders? Is he obliged to be careful and of good understanding in his profession; because the health and life of many may (under God) depend on his care and skill? Then surely we cannot but esteem the office of a Christian minister important; whose study and aim it must be, to cure men of their spiritual disorders,

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and to promote in them that health and soundness of mind, which consist in the knowledge and love of God, and in the practice of true religion and virtue.

Nor are you less obliged to care and skill in your station, since the virtue and eternal welfare of the souls entrusted to your instruction may, in a great measure, depend on the *nature* of the doctrines you preach, and on the *methods* you take to recommend and enforce them.

If to bring unthinking sinners to a sober consideration of the folly and infinite danger of their way; if to lead humble and penitent souls to a right understanding and trust in the mercies of God, and the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, to raise the drooping heart, and comfort the feeble minded, to cherish in the souls of men a love of piety and goodness, by a clear and strong representation of their reasonableness, their excellence, and the eternal rewards which await them in the world to come; if to save men from everlasting perdition, and guide them in those paths which end in *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*: if all this work be important: such is yours. And well may we say upon this occasion, *Who is sufficient for these things!* But, blessed be God, every faithful minister may say also, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.*

I add: it is a matter of infinite consequence to *yourself*, how you discharge the duties of your

your office. You are to watch for souls, as one that must give an account. You must so instruct your hearers, and so live among them, exemplifying your doctrine by a conversation so pure and blameless, that if any, under your ministry, prove so unhappy as to perish; their ruin may in no degree be chargeable on you; but, with St. Paul, Acts xx. 26. you may be able to say, *I am pure from the blood of all men.* Son of man, saith God to the prophet, Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19. *I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.*

With the greatest zeal, study spiritual wisdom, or true religion, yourself, and to promote it in others: since they that be thus wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3.

Or, though a faithful minister should be so unhappy as to find but small success: under this mournful circumstance, it will be his consolation to consider, that his own acceptance with
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God depends, not on such an uncertainty, as the improvement which others shall make of his ministry; but on his own faithfulness, his sincere desire, his honest diligent endeavour to be useful. *Though Israel be not gathered, saith the prophet, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, Isa. xlix. 5.*

Our blessed Saviour himself, *though never man spake or lived like him*, yet made but few converts to truth and righteousness. It may happen, that the best instructions a minister can give, shall be like seed scattered on hard and barren rocks. The true way to enjoy a stable peace and constant satisfaction of mind is, *to aim well*, to exhibit such doctrine, and such a life, as have a genuine tendency to edifie. The event you must leave to the blessing of God, and the improvement of those that hear you.

2. The honest faithful discharge of your duty has its *labours* and *difficulties*.

You will not take this observation as a discouragement; but as an argument to fortifie your mind with that steady resolution, which the *difficulties* of your office render necessary; and which the *goodness* and *usefulness* of it highly merit at your hands. Can any great design be carried on well, can we expect any important enterprize to succeed happily, without labour and pains? And does the prospect of difficulty and opposition hold back generous minds from just and laudable undertakings? No: it puts life and spirit into them: it kindles their zeal: it rouzes all their powers; and sets them

them on the most vigorous efforts to accomplish the glorious work they have in view. When the friends of St. Paul, apprehensive what dangers would attend him, earnestly dissuaded him from going up to Jerusalem; he made just such a reply as might be expected from a man, whose whole heart and soul were engaged in his divine calling. *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? For I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,* Acts xxi. 13. The same apostle, taking notice of the bonds and afflictions that did abide him, adds: *But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God,* Acts xx. 24.

Thanks be to God, there is no need to mention this example of the apostle, to prepare you to endure persecution. We live under a just government, which allows and protects us in a full extent of religious liberty. Yet all the ministers of *Christ* should be so fully persuaded of the truth of the gospel, and in heart and affection such firm friends to it; as to be ready to suffer even unto death, should they be called to it for the name of *Christ*.

And it may not be unuseful to add: that though we have abundant reason to rejoice in our religious liberty, yet there are some smaller degrees of persecution, which may possibly fall

to your lot, to exercise your patience, and prove your integrity.

A close disinterested search after truth, which is a conduct that *should* give you the esteem of all men, may however make you some enemies. As you are, so far as your sphere reaches, *set for the defence of the gospel*, and bound to study it with care and impartiality, that you may lay before your people such doctrines, not as human schemes have stamp with their authority, but which *the Holy Ghost teacheth, in the bible, our only rule*: 'tis not impossible, but this honest diligence of yours may lead you to observe, that there are some *received* and *popular* opinions, recommended by great names, and taught as of great importance, which are really so far from gospel-truths, that they are great mistakes, inconsistent with the gospel, injurious to the character of its divine author, and to the design of its promulgation. Now though you will not lightly, and in haste, either espouse or condemn any opinion; nor think it answers, but *greatly obstructs*, the design of the Christian ministry, to make the pulpit a place for *controversy*: yet if, after mature deliberate search, with humble and earnest prayer to the eternal *Father of lights* for his guidance, you should perceive any doctrines, recommended as Christian, which are no original genuine parts of christianity, and which are hurtful to sound faith and morals; you will then think yourself obliged, to take

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proper opportunities of laying open *such* mistakes. To conceal *important* truths, and let *dangerous* errors pass unremarked, for the sake of screening yourself, and to preserve your own ease, you will judge to be *a walking in craftiness, and handling the word of God deceitfully*: and that contrary to this, you are, *by manifestation of the truth, to commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

But now what is like to be the *consequence* of this honesty and faithfulness? Why, as there be some, almost in every place, who take an easier way to judge of truth, than by the labour and travail of *examination*; who *will* conclude the doctrines they have been bred up in, and naturalized to, and espoused, must be right; and cannot bear to have them disputed, though with the greatest modesty of temper, and decency of language: consequently, the truths you deliver, which happen not to coincide with the principles of people of this spirit, will not only be unwelcome to them, but kindle their resentment. They will count you an *enemy*, and so will treat you. The greatest inoffensiveness and purity of manners will not secure you good treatment from men of *narrow minds, and party zeal.*

You may find trouble from some, who are *crafty and designing*; who *know* they have no method, or none so effectual, to keep up their credit and influence, as by the strength of *party*, and by *enclosures of their own making*: and
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from others, who though, upon the whole, of excellent characters, yet have not a true sense of the rights of private judgment, consider not the importance and unspeakable advantages of free enquiry, and have an undue fondness for their own side of a question.

In a word : as you have various tempers to deal with, and must, like St. Paul, *become all things to all men*, (so far only as you may with a good conscience) *if by any means you may save some* ; you will find this a work of *difficulty*.

To which let me add ; you will be obliged to *constant labour* in studying the scriptures ; in forming such discourses upon them, as may be most useful and seasonable ; and above all, in cherishing such a serious and lively sense of divine things in your own heart, as will render your labour a pleasure, and possess you with a settled zeal to *do the work of an evangelist*.

But I only touch on these things here, as there will be an opportunity of enlarging upon them under the second general head.

My representation of the *nature* of your office would be extremely defective, if I did not add,

3. That the work you have chosen is an *honourable* and *good* one.

This, saith St. Paul, *is a true saying ; if any man desire the office of a * bishop, he desireth a good work*.

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* The Greek word, which we translate *bishop*, signifies an

It is good for *yourself*. Not indeed for temporal gain: you are on the wrong side for this. But mind your duty faithfully, and trust to the *next life*; and you will find *your labour in the Lord* recompensed far beyond your largest wish, and most extensive imagination.

It is your advantage, that while other employments are apt to hinder men, and prove an avocation to them in their Christian calling; the more intirely you set yourself to your employ, you thereby become the better Christian, and grow in *your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light*. Your business leads you to think much and often on *the mercies of God*, and *the exceeding great and precious promises* of his word: which are a never-failing spring of consolation to a good and considerate mind.

an inspector, or overseer: and because a presbyter, elder or teacher in the church, is to *watch over his people*; hence he is in *scripture* stiled *ἐπισκοπος*, *bishop*. The elders of the church at *Ephesus*, whom St. Paul sent for, to leave with them his last advice, are all by him called *ἐπισκοποι*, *bishops*, Acts xx. 28. And St. Peter exhorts all the presbyters or elders, to whom he wrote, to be *bishops* unto the flock of God, *ἐπισκοπῶντες*, 1 Pet. v. 2. So that every presbyter, or elder, who labours in the word and doctrine, feeding and watching over the flock of God, is a *scripture-bishop*. I may go a step farther, and observe; that the Christian laity, the Christian people, are directed in scripture to exercise the office of a *bishop* to one another, Heb. xii. 15. *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God*. In the Greek, *ἐπισκοπῶντες*, that is, exercising an *episcopal* or *bishop's* care.

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And while you contemplate the graces and virtues of a Christian life, in order to recommend them in the best manner you can unto others; your own mind will be possessed with a deeper sense of their excellence and worth. So that your employment is the exercise of the best powers and faculties of man, on the best and noblest objects. It is the employment of the mind in *searching after God*; in contemplating his perfections, his works, his providence, the riches of his grace *in Christ*, the precepts of his word, and what is that spirit and conduct which gives a man the truest dignity, and elevation; producing a likeness to the original of all good, and preparing for the eternal enjoyment of him in the perfection of knowledge and rectitude.

Thus good and eligible is your work with regard to *yourself*. It is *good* also in the happy effects on the welfare of your *fellow-creatures*, that may justly be hoped and expected from it. He who promoteth mens piety and virtue, and helps forward the salvation of their souls, serves them in their best interest; and is their friend, much more than he could be, in assisting them to worldly prosperity. In this last case, he is of use to them but for a short time. In the former, he helps them to a happiness that endures for ever.

Thus a faithful discharge of your duty has the most happy consequences on yourself, and, probably, on some of them who hear you. I

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conclude this part in the words of St. Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 16. *Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine: continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

Having put you in remembrance of the nature of your office; I proceed to the

IId head; which is to recommend the cultivation of such a *spirit* and *conduct* as will be necessary, to fulfil your ministry with comfort and honour to yourself, and usefulness to your flock.

I. The whole being a *spiritual* and *divine* service, it is above all things necessary, that you yourself have the *spirit* and *power* of religion.

It is a sad drudgery, when a man is tied down to an employment, that agrees not with his inclination and temper. His work must go on very heavily, when he does it only because he is *forced* to it. But let his genius and temper suit the business he is in; and then, his labour is his delight, and his mind is never more at rest, than when it is most employed. This observation holds very strong, when applied to the work of a *minister*.

If he has not purity of heart, and a true relish of divine matters; if he feels nothing in himself of a spirit of piety and devotion: he will find it a *heavy task* to be obliged to think often of these things. It will go sadly against the grain, to recommend them to others, when he

he knows nothing of them in his own temper and experience. All must be forced and unnatural. He must be perpetually *self-condemned*, while with a seeming gravity and earnestness, he exhorts his audience to mind what he is not careful to mind himself. *Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee,* Psal. l. 16, 17. Better to be in the lowest employment in the world, than to have the ministerial function on these terms!

But if he is possessed with a supreme love to *God and Christ*; if a sense of the ever-present *God* be strong in his heart; and his great concern is to be approved of him; if he has a just sense of the unreasonableness and danger of sin, a fixt and universal hatred to it; if he has well considered the worth of souls, and the value of *God's* favour; and those divine graces reign in his own heart, which it is his business to recommend to his hearers; if he has weighed the infinitely superior importance of *things eternal* to *things temporal*; and his heart is duely influenc'd and governed by this right sense of things: he is then in a condition to go on pleasantly in his work; and having this lively impression of religion upon his own soul, he will be zealous, and unwearied in his endeavours, to promote it in the hearts and lives of others.

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Many a man of but indifferent parts, and intellectual endowments, *with this holy and zealous heart*, has done great service in the church of *Christ*; when others, of much more knowledge and learning, yet wanting this *fundamental* qualification, and *not moved to this work by the Holy Ghost*, have done very little good; often abundance of hurt, by their avarice, their thirst of power, their proud contentions, and wrangling speculations.

He whose business is *to lead* the devotions of a Christian assembly, should be himself *a devout* man. And as the celestial fire of devotion will grow languid, if not constantly attended and fed; you must *continue instant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance*. And when you feel in your own mind the pleasures of divine worship, grounded on a right sense of *God*, his perfections, providence, grace, reconcileableness to sinful men through *Jesus Christ*; all which encourage the soul to draw nigh to him: I say, when you yourself thus know the advantages of devotion; you will be the better fitted, and have a greater concern to recommend *this* part of christianity unto others.

And *this* is a part of religion, which, I apprehend, the ministers of this day have *peculiar* need to lay before their people, and urge them to the practice of. Family and closet prayers are growing more and more out of use.

The world is apt to run into *extremes*. We are told, that observing men of the last age
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grew disgusted to see in many, high pretences to devotion and sanctity, great strictness and length in their times of prayer, and other exercises of divine service, when, at the same time, they were *great offenders* in the plain duties and virtues of social life. There may be too much truth in this: but be it ever so true, it proves nothing but what every body knows; viz. that *good things may be abused*. It makes nothing against the reasonableness of devotion: which is founded in the relation we bear to *Almighty God*, as our Creator, our supreme governour, our most bountiful and constant benefactor, our father in *Christ*, on whom is all our dependance.

Indeed we must not pray under the imagination that we can *inform* him; or as if his goodness was slow, and wanted *soliciting*. But prayer will always be a reasonable service, and a necessary duty, while it has a tendency to cherish in us reverence, gratitude, trust and obedience to our Maker.

2. Being a minister of the *word of God*, you are to *study that word*, and make it your constant rule of doctrine and worship.

The scripture is such a treasure of the best wisdom, as to merit our most attentive thoughts, and unwearied search. Its original is from *God*; and its end, to lead us to *God*, and to make us wise unto salvation. *All scripture, saith St. Paul, is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for*

correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. And since it is *for instruction in righteousness*, that we may be *furnished unto all good works*; you will account those scripture-doctrines most important, deserving to be most frequently insisted on, and most earnestly recommended, which have the directest tendency to make your hearers *righteous and good*. You are to consider what will be most *profitable*; what will answer the great end of the ministry, which, as was said before, is *to make men wise unto salvation*.

We must not suffer *worldly interest*, or the *favour of men*, to interpret the scriptures for us; and to be our advisers, what doctrines we shall preach, and what we shall let alone. We should not allow so much as *a wish*, that those schemes and forms may be true, which are most friendly to worldly and selfish views: because this will be apt to put a bias upon the understanding, and hinder that love and impartial regard for truth, which, how little soever it really prevails, has such an obvious and undeniable excellence, that all men agree to speak well of it, as a most worthy and amiable temper of mind.

And, though *prudence* is an excellent endowment; and many have hurted their usefulness, for want of duely considering the prejudices and weaknesses of mankind, and conveying

veying their instructions in proper season, and manner: yet an *honest*, though *imprudent* man, who has a steady uncorrupted love of truth, only does not sufficiently consider where to speak, and where to be silent; is a character *incomparably superior* to a man of such false prudence, and despicable craft, that he is all for *prophecyng smooth things*; and, to save himself, and keep fair with those who have the power to befriend him, will not put himself to the hazard of enquiring, whether received doctrines are true ones; or if he finds them false, and of pernicious tendency, will not declare it.

In reading the *New Testament*, we cannot but observe, its great distinguishing character is, a *scheme of mercy and grace for sinful men*: the *ministry of reconciliation* is, *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses*. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. So that the mercies of God, and the mediation of Jesus Christ, are the *foundation* of the gospel; and *we are accepted in the beloved Son of God*.

You will always remember then, that you are a *Christian* minister; and that it is your business to preach Jesus Christ. Now what is it to preach Christ? The phrase, *preaching Christ*, as it stands in the New Testament, does indeed partly mean, *the testifying and proving Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God*. I could easily have produced various passages, wherein

this is the direct and undoubted meaning. And in *this* sense, it may be sometimes useful and expedient, (though I should think, but seldom in a Christian assembly, yet sometimes it may be expedient) *so* to preach Christ: especially where it is fashionable, and look'd upon as a mark of more than vulgar understanding, so to magnifie the sufficiency of the light of nature, as to imply, that the incarnation of Christ and the promulgation of his gospel are of little use.

A minister of the gospel should be well qualified *to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the faith and hope that is in him.* He ought to understand the New Testament well: not only acquainting himself with the *words* and *sounds*, but using every help to know *their true meaning*; that he may be able to distinguish the several parts and doctrines of real original christianity, from those corruptions and additions which *encumber* and *deface* it.

But farther: that you may preach *Christ*, you ought often to lay before your hearers *this faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*; and use all endeavours to convince them of *sin*; what a hazardous state they are in by it; that so they may discern and feel the importance of the doctrine just mentioned.

And in order to impress on mens minds a proper sense of *the exceeding riches of Christ's goodness in becoming man, in dwelling among us,*
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and dying for our sake; you will represent to them the *dignity and divinity* of his person.

And whenever a minister speaks on this head, he should keep close to *the simplicity of the scriptures*; avoiding, with a conscientious scrupulosity, all those *scholastic terms*, and phrases of art, and men's device, which, to use the apostle's words, *minister questions rather than godly edifying*; and whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings.

For the encouragement even of the greatest sinners, provided they are willing to leave their sins, and become the subjects of Christ, you are to lay before them the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice, and the prevalence of his *intercession*; that *his blood cleanseth from all sin*, and that *he is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him*, seeing he ever liveth to make *intercession for them*.

For the direction and comfort of enquiring humble souls, you will acquaint them with their *need of the spirit and grace of God*, to assist and prosper them in the spiritual life; and how ready God is to give the holy spirit to them that ask him. And since we have a great High Priest, who is gone into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; you will exhort them, to come freely to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Christ

Christ must be preached in every office and character he bears; as *teacher*, and *king*, as well as *priest*; and that, whereas *he hath obtained eternal redemption*, he will bestow it on them only, who *obey him*. The same apostle who saith, 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*, says also; *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works*, Tit. iii. 8.

As you are to lead the devotions of a Christian assembly, you must not admit such phrases and expressions (however usual they may be) into your *prayers*, as you think will tend to convey false notions into the minds of your fellow-worshippers, or support them therein. Weigh your expressions before you adopt them. Having the liberty of forming your own prayers, be very careful that matters of *doubtful disputation* do not mix with them; which would break and stop the devotion of some of the most conscientious and intelligent worshippers.

Every thing in prayer should be *plain* and *simple*, and at the remotest distance from the phrases and peculiarities of *any party*.

It will not be amiss to observe here: that great regard should be had to the *manner* of performing the several parts of our work in the sanctuary. In our *prayers* let us endeavour
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after such a happy talent, as to raise and keep up the devotion of the assembly. There should be such a gravity of thought and pronunciation, as is the natural product of a serious mind, aw'd with a sense of *God most high*. And that we may lead the worship decently, and with acceptance, let us carefully avoid such *incoherence* and *rambling*, and all such *low* and *slovenly* expressions, as will offend the understanding, and grate upon the ear of those who can best discern.

In your *sermons*, you are to use *great plainness of speech*, that the meanest understanding may apprehend the doctrines and instructions you would convey. He is an ill steward who, having *ten* to provide for, feeds *one*, and sends *nine* empty away. Men of the clearest heads are always the clearest speakers, and easiest to be understood. To be *plain*, and to be *low*, are two things. The first is an excellence; the other betrays a want of understanding, or want of care. There is a plainness level to common capacities, which yet has a judiciousness and solidity able to entertain those of the truest taste, and best understanding. That public speaker, who has both these, has attained to a *good degree*. And when his discourses are made on the substantial things of religion; on the *weightier matters of God's law*; and pronounced with a *grave* and *natural* voice, animated with the life and zeal of a heart that *feels* the things he speaks; a preacher, thus

thus endowed, may reasonably hope, that God will bless him to his hearers, and that he shall make them wiser and better by what he says to them.

3. You are to consider and be acquainted with *the state of your flock*, that you may know *how to give unto every one their portion in due season*.

I do not mean, that when you perceive a man guilty of this or that sin, you are to point him out in your discourse, and make him *the mark* of the congregation. This will *provoke* rather than *edify*. But as a minister, by acquainting himself with his hearers, may learn in what *virtues* they are most defective, and to what *evils* they are most addicted; he should meditate on those subjects for the pulpit, not which may be most agreeable to his own taste and genius, but which are most suitable, and most likely to improve those who hear him. We may represent the duties and virtues of the Christian life, and their contrary vices, in such manner, as shall convey light and conviction, and offend no body. And if we can be so happy, as to convince and persuade without provoking, we shall answer all the ends that a good and benevolent man can wish.

It will be particularly a minister's wisdom, to have regard to *the young persons* of his society; and to use all the skill and address he is master of, to induce them *to remember their Creator in the days of their youth*.

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On these must be our eye; that, instead of the *fathers*, when they are cut down by the hand of death, may come the *children*, to fill up their place in the church of God. Let us watch every appearance of good in them, and encourage it to the utmost. Abundance of good, much more than a stranger can imagine, may be done to them, when kindly and prudently treated. And when once they are persuaded we aim at nothing but their good, and they come to give a sober attention to our counsels; here is a delightful prospect, that we shall be the happy instruments of settling in them those good principles, which lay the surest foundation of passing, with reputation and usefulness, through this world, and of their eternal happiness in the world to come. He that winneth souls is wise, Prov. xii. 30. and that time, and those thoughts and endeavours which are spent this way, are, of all other, the best laid out. I have spoken already concerning a preacher's *internal* qualifications; as to the religion of the heart. Let me add

4. That his instructions may be well heard, and meet with success, it is very necessary that he show a good example; that the virtues he recommends to others shine out in his own life and conversation.

Christ saith to his disciples, Mat. v. Ye are the light of the world; the salt of the earth: let

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your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works. If this doctrine belong to our Lord's disciples in general, it belongs most of all to his *ministers*.

It will be a severe reproach, and great scandal, if the faults of a minister's life shall make those words of the apostle applicable unto him; Rom. ii. 21. *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* While you instruct your people *to set their affection on things above, and not on things on the earth*; let there be nothing in your conduct that indicates an earthly, sordid, covetous temper. Cherish therefore such an elevation of soul, and stand so free of all mean selfishness, that your people may see, *you seek not theirs, but them.*

And while a minister manifests a heart weaned from the world; this, if his lot is cast among a people of any generosity of temper, will be so far from making them lukewarm and careless about his support, that it will heighten their zeal and affection, to do what in them lies, to make his abode among them easy and comfortable.

While you exhort others to live *sober and temperate* lives, you must be at the remotest distance from a fondness and slavery to *appetite*.

And being a minister of the *God of peace*, and of *Jesus the prince of peace*; *meekness* and *peaceableness* must run through the whole of your deportment. *Let nothing be done through*
strife

strife and vain glory. Count all that honour to be real *disgrace* and *shame*, which arises from the abetting and encouraging of *division* and *party*. Study the liberty and charity of the gospel, and *stand fast* therein. Show on all occasions such a ready mind to *peace* and *unity*, that, wherein you stand separate from other Christians, it may appear to all unprejudiced minds, you do not exclude them, but are excluded by them.

Some may find it *politically* right (right for their own *power* or *gain*) but certainly it is *religiously* wrong, to make such terms of Christian communion, as *Christ* and his *apostles* never made. Men who thirst after sway, or profit, may find *their* account in it. But inexpressible damage is hereby done to religion. The laying a stress on opinions and practises, and treating them as *essentials*, which the gospel either knows nothing about, or, at most, directs us to look upon as of *doubtful disputation*, has turned the Christian religion (in its own nature the most peaceable, and gentle, and friendly institution in the world) into an engine of *most bitter and ruinous discord*; and miserably defaced, and almost worn out, *Christ's* own mark of his disciples, viz. *By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*, Joh. xiii. 35.

Let the guilt and blame of all this evil rest where it is due. As you preach the good will

of God, the exceeding riches of his kindness to men; your life must agree with this; a life of benevolence and doing good. You are *to love your enemies*, and force them, if possible, to become your friends; by the powerful attraction of a kind spirit, an obliging behaviour, and a readiness, upon all occasions, to return them good offices for their ill ones.

What an excellent temper of this sort had *St. Paul*! who tells some that did not give him the good treatment he had merited; *I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.* 2 Cor. xii. 15. *Being reviled, saith he, we bless; being defamed we intreat.* 1 Cor. iv. 13.

What our English translation renders, *I will spend and be spent FOR YOU*, is, exactly according to the original, *I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls*, *υπερ των ψυχων υμων*. 'Tis for the souls of men, a minister should have the greatest affection and zeal; exercising all patience, and watching all opportunities to do them good.

And thus when your people observe in you a conduct blameless, benevolent, and exemplary; when they see you love them, and chiefly aim to promote their spiritual and eternal good; such a carriage cannot fail to gain their esteem and love. And when they are in love with

the speaker, and know his life to be all of a piece with the good things he says; this will give weight to his doctrine; and his instructions will be heard to the greatest advantage.

Finally, a minister, to all his care and faithfulness, must add constant and fervent prayers unto God: imploring heavenly illumination, that he may rightly understand and dispense the word of truth; the quickening grace of God, that the spirit of religion may be kept alive in his own soul; and a divine power to give efficacy and success to his ministrations. For though *Paul* plant, and *Apollos* water, it is *God* who giveth the increase.

I shall conclude with putting you in mind of a few apostolical directions unto the Christian minister.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Tit. ii. 7, 8. Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for

for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over God's heritage; but being an example to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3, 4. Amen.

The E N D.

